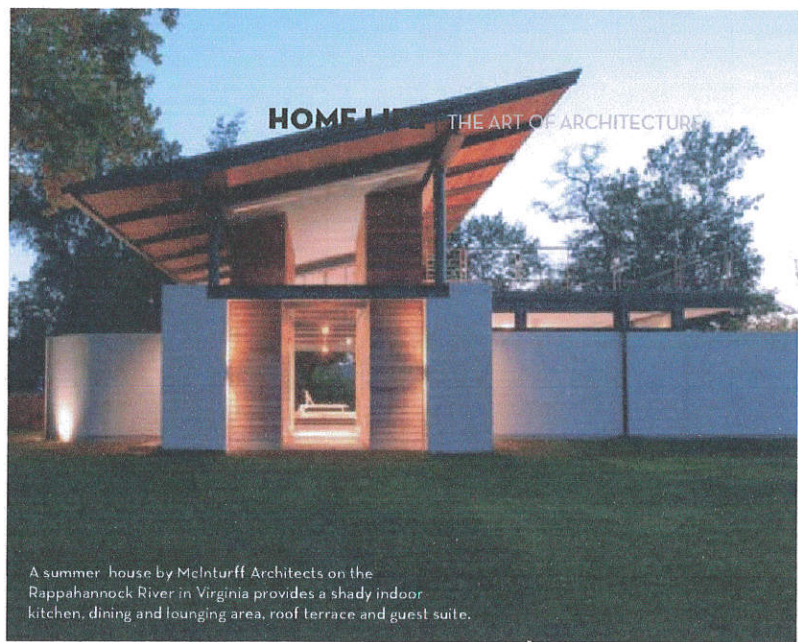


The site dictates how a design develops, says Randall Mars of Randall Mars Architects, who created this McLean, Va., home to take advantage of the topography.



A summer house by McInturff Architects on the Rappahannock River in Virginia provides a shady indoor kitchen, dining and lounging area, roof terrace and guest suite.

The *Art* of Architecture

A storied past and brilliant future influence the designs of Washington's top architects

BY SHERRY MOELLER

PHOTOS BY: LEFT, ANICE HOAGLANDER. RIGHT, JULIA HEINE/MCINTURFF ARCHITECTS

In their quest for creativity, area architects often delve into the past - theirs, their clients' and the homesites' - to find inspiration. This, along with the contextual influences of the sites, fuels the fire of their designs.

"Our inspiration comes from the site itself, nature, views, and their relationship to context, including other structures around the site that influence the design in scale and privacy," says James F. Rill AIA, of Rill Architects. "Put all those elements together and you have a recipe for creativity."

Making the landscape of the nation's capital come alive with their work, Washington architects rely on many factors, such as energy, discipline and memory, to achieve their goals. Ralph Cunningham, FAIA, of Cunningham|Quill Architects and a District native, says, "An architect is like a magician, making something real out of a set of ideas." His aim, he notes, is to "weave modern architecture into historic fabric that honors the old and illuminates the new with elegant simplicity."

Budgets also affect the creativity of the architects' design, but often in a positive way. "There's strong creativity in working with a budget," Rill says.

"Some of our most creative projects have overcome tight budgets

with great spirit," adds Mark McInturff, FAIA, of McInturff Architects. An overall design can also be affected by the owner's collections or possessions. "Still others have developed a theme of details that reward movement through the house," McInturff says, adding that creativity in architecture is the ability to make something new and unique with age-old concepts and materials interpreted.

"It's the collision of the challenge and the final idea that defines creativity," Rill notes. "Going outside what you've done, what is typical, and inventing new concepts are all part of the creative process."

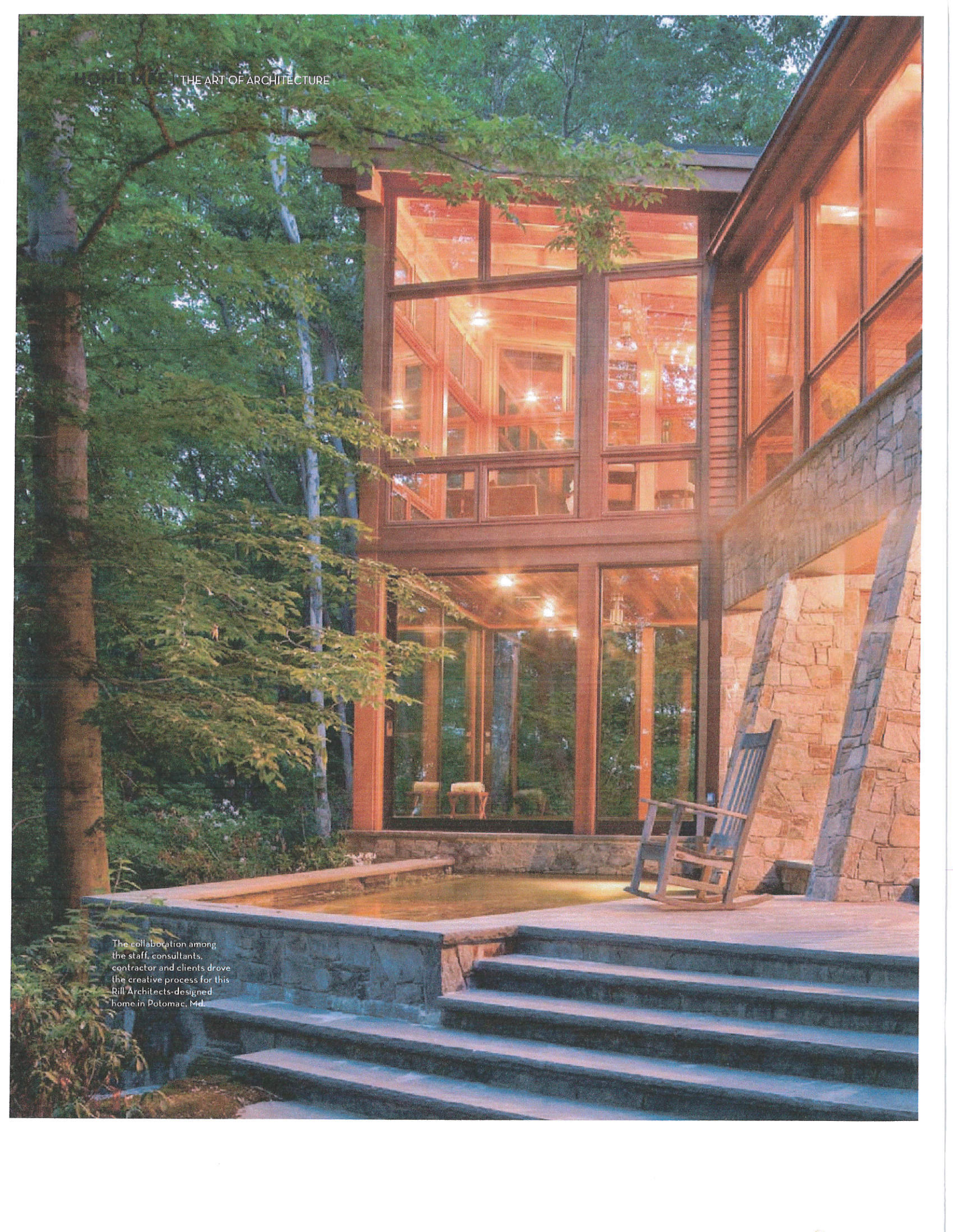
"A home or detail itself is perhaps not creative, but the ideas that inform a home or detail as a new experience are what I find creative," says David Jameson, FAIA, of David Jameson Architect.

For Jameson, "seeing" creativity in architecture occurs at the confluence between ideas and meaning. "In this way," he adds, "architecture has the ability to touch one's mind, eye and soul. My creativity is drawn from the experiential. I find creative ideas in unexpected places, such as playing with my kids or traveling."

The morning commute gives David Jones, AIA, of David Jones Architects, time to reflect on design ideas. "Just because we don't have a pencil in our hands doesn't mean we are not visualizing something new."

"A GOOD BUILDING should be a celebration of the owner's quiet good taste. It is after all a testament of who we are and what choices we make."

SIMON JACOBSEN, ASSOCIATE AIA



The collaboration among the staff, consultants, contractor and clients drove the creative process for this Rill Architects-designed home in Potomac, Md.



Clean lines define the living space with a concrete column becoming part of the interior of the Cunningham | Quill Architects-designed house in Glen Echo, Md.



The creative process is one of discovery, says Greg Wiedemann of Wiedemann Architects, the designer of this modern Bethesda, Md., house.

Patience, courage and energy drive his firm's creative process. "Sometimes you spend days on a particular design approach for a house, and it doesn't work – you need the courage to start over," he says. While his designs are grounded in the tradition of American residential architecture, he is often asked to create spaces that look like they've always been there from the outside, but showcase modern spaces inside. That's where patience and energy come into play.

Paying attention to the details of the home make a project successful, says Greg Wiedemann, AIA, of Wiedemann Architects. Whether it's a window seat that provides a place to read, a richly detailed library that fills a room with an extensive collection, or simply a well-proportioned porch, "it's those details and the sum of those parts that define 'home,'" he adds. We all carry memories of houses we lived in or visited that shape our sense of home.

For Jacobsen Architecture, buildings are designed inside out. Simon Jacobsen, Associate AIA and managing design partner, says, "We not only design the structure and how it smartly exists and survives in the world, but we also design the interiors and that is where the inspiration for the rest of the house starts." The firm looks at local architecture, culture and immediate surroundings and "then we try and fit in like the quiet new kid at school."

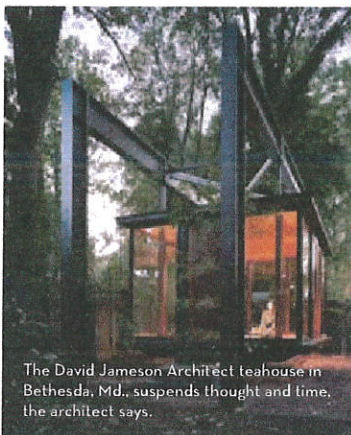
"What greatly affects the process is often the client's receptiveness to creativity," says Randall Mars, AIA, of Randall Mars Architects. "Great clients make great architecture."

Hearing that a home he designed looks as if it had always been there is a compliment cherished by Stephen Muse, FAIA, of Muse Architects. "This is the type of natural fit that we are looking for through our creative design process," Muse says. Important memories can often be recaptured in new homes. An example of this approach is a house designed for a couple that spent much of their lives in Japan. They asked for a home with "Japanese simplicity," not a home that would be entered

by "crossing a bridge over a koi pond."

"A good building should be a celebration of the owner's quiet good taste. It is after all a testament of who we are and what choices we make," Jacobsen adds.

Architecture can be quiet, but can also make a profound statement. Richard Loosle-Ortega, RA, of KUBE Architecture, became an architect because he loves creating inspiring spaces that add emotion to lives and provide vessels within to act out daily rituals, whether sacred or profane, such as brushing one's teeth in a bathroom with a great view or getting married in a beautiful garden.



The David Jameson Architect tea house in Bethesda, Md., suspends thought and time, the architect says.

The goal of John Katinas, AIA, and Michael Bruckwick, AIA, of Katinas Bruckwick Architecture, is to envision and complete something new, different, emotional and unique. "We draw on a sense of materials, space, flow, light and color. The pursuit for and reward of a unique design drives the process," Katinas says.

Katinas, Bruckwick, Jameson and Muse always knew they wanted to be architects. At age 12, McInturff heard that architects made models, which he loved to do at that age, so he decided to pursue that field as well. "It turns out we do a lot of other fun things, too," he says.

For others, including Rill and Wiedemann, the affirmation of their chosen career came later in life.

"I studied mathematics, engineering and art before entering architecture school," Wiedemann says. "Architecture brought all my interests together." Rill also studied art and played football, which influences his team approach to design, before going to graduate school for architecture.

"We are frequently surprised as we design," McInturff says. "We don't start knowing where we're going to go. We find out, as the homeowners do, along the way."

To read more about these architects and view additional images, go to www.washingtonlife.com.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: JAMES RAY SPAHN. THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: CHAMWELL MACKENZIE. TOP RIGHT: ANICE ROACHLANDER. CENTR.: PAUL WARCHOL.